



**MICHIGAN GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL**

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**<http://mimgc.org>**

June 1, 2010

Re: SB 1154

Last August the Michigan Genealogical Council (MGC) rallied in front of the Capitol and marched over to the Michigan Library and Historical Center surrounding the building with genealogists, historians and librarians holding a green ribbon. We were protesting the Governor's Executive Order breaking up the Michigan Department of History, Arts, and Libraries. Language in the EO also threatened the scattering of what was termed the "non-Michigan Genealogical Collection". We were also active participants in the Michigan Library Association rally in September. This second rally took place the day after the Governor amended her original EO.

This year while we have been less visible, we have not been inactive. The MGC has been actively seeking a solution and participating in the process with the Michigan Center for Innovation and Reinvention (MCIR) Board, which the Governor charged to find the best uses for the Michigan Library and Historical Center Building. We have been looking for solutions that will:

1. Keep all of the genealogy collections under the same roof at the Michigan Library and Historical Center.
2. Keep the collections accessible to researchers.
3. Keep these collections under the protection and control of State government.

The current boilerplate language in SB 1154 is too restrictive in helping the Library reach these goals. Negotiations have been taking place that satisfy each of three goals. The MGC is concerned if the bill advances in its present form, the best solution that has been placed on the table will be prohibited by this very well meaning yet overly restrictive language inserted with the intent of preserving the collection. There is no funding in place to staff, maintain, and continue to develop the collection.

At each of the MCIR Board meetings, our representative, Dr. Frank Boles, Director of the Clarke Historical Library has been present. In addition to Frank, at the March 15 meeting, Curt Witcher, Manager of the Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library in Ft. Wayne, Indiana was also on hand to offer his expert testimony about a genealogy collection being utilized as a magnet for tourism. Curt and his team have effectively transformed Ft. Wayne into a destination for family history buffs from every state. His message was, if Ft.

Wayne can do it, so can Lansing. Curt also met that same afternoon with the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau, to discuss how genealogy is the number three tourist attraction in Ft. Wayne – and how that success could be replicated in Lansing. As home of the number tenth best genealogy collection in the United States, here at the Michigan Library and Historical Center, we already have the most important component in place.

If the genealogical collection – or a part of it is made inaccessible to the public, the promotion of Lansing as a genealogical research destination becomes equally inaccessible. Should the collections can remain available, MGC along other partners is prepared to cosponsor a Great Lakes regional genealogy conference in Lansing, with the Michigan Library and Historical Center as the central research anchor. Once the collections are out of their current uncertain status, preparations may begin in earnest for this event. Currently we are looking at 2012 date.

I am attaching an article from the March 4 posted on <http://physorg.com> that was presented to the MCIR Board in March by Curt Witcher. The full article was published in the Journal of Travel Research. This article shows the unprecedented rise in heritage tourism.

Recent television programs such as the PBS series Faces of America and NBC's Who Do You Think Your Are have catapulted an increase of interest in family history research. The NBC program has been renewed for a second season. It is the US version of a program that premiered in Great Britain. British research facilities have seen an increase in patron traffic that has not diminished in the seven years since its premier.

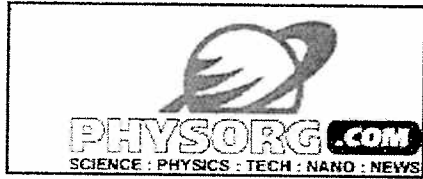
As Cynthia Grostick stated in her March 28 letter, "Be careful what you wish for, you may get it." The MGC is concerned that unintended consequences will result if SB1154 is passed with its current boilerplate language.

The Governor recently vetoed similar boilerplate language in HB 5394 on April 1, 2010. Governor Granholm stated in her veto message:

*"I am concerned with the boilerplate provision that requires the Library of Michigan to maintain custody of the non-Michigan genealogy and federal documents collections and to not sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of these collections. I want to preserve the Library of Michigan's flexibility in exploring suitable candidates to assume the custodial responsibilities of these collections."*

The MGC recommends modification or removal of the language in Section 804 of SB 1154, as this could legislatively block what is currently the most viable and attractive solution for the Genealogical Collection.

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## Genealogical tourism redefining leisure travel market, professor says

March 4th, 2010 in Other Sciences / Social Sciences



[Enlarge](#)

Recreation, sport and tourism professor Carla Santos, right, and graduate student Grace Yan found that genealogical tourism reflects contemporary tourists' preference for authentic, lived experiences over the bubble-like environment of an all-inclusive resort or a pleasure cruise. Credit: L. Brian Stauffer

**For the work-weary, the word "vacation" may conjure images of leisurely, carefree days at the beach sipping umbrella drinks. But according to published research by a University of Illinois expert in tourism and recreation, genealogical tourism is one of the fastest growing markets in vacation travel because it represents a conscious shift away from relaxation and into the realm of personal enrichment and fulfillment.**

The increase in popularity of genealogical tourism reflects contemporary tourists' preference for authentic, lived experiences over the bubble-like environment of an all-inclusive resort or a pleasure cruise, says U. of I. recreation, sport and tourism professor Carla Santos.

"Genealogical tourism provides an irreplaceable dimension of material reality that's missing from our postmodern society," Santos said.

Traveling to the old church where one's great grandparents used to worship in rural Ireland, or buying a loaf of bread from a tiny grocery store in the village where one's grandmother was from in Greece create a critical space to imagine and feel life as a form of continuation, says co-author and U. of I. graduate student Grace Yan.

The study, published in a recent issue of the *Journal of Travel Research*, also asserts that the popularity of genealogical tourism is due to living in a world where mediated, inauthentic experiences have become such an ingrained part of everyday life that we're almost unaware of it.

"Genealogical tourism capitalizes on this by allowing individuals to experience the sensuous charms of antiquity, and provides a way of experiencing something eternal and authentic that transcends the present," Santos said.

In academic analyses of the 1980s and early 1990s, tourism was seen through the lens of an escape from the reality of the workaday world. Today, scholars approach travel and tourism in a much more complex and nuanced fashion, the authors said.

"We believe that movement is due partly to the increasing sociological awareness of the post-industrial society that we currently live in," Santos said. "With tourism studies developing a more sophisticated interpretative paradigm, more meanings of tourism have been discussed in academia, including the hunt for exoticism and experiencing nostalgia."

The movement away from escapism toward personal enrichment in the last 15 years is also a baby boomer-influenced trend.

"According to our research, the baby boomer generation now constitutes the primary profile of genealogical travelers," Yan said. "Aging plays an important role in defining a person's choice of tourism, and genealogical travel is contemporary society's way of attaining a more coherent and continuous, albeit imagined, view of ourselves in connection with the past."

The authors say another part of what's contributing to the rise in popularity of genealogical tourism is the diaspora of races, cultures and ethnicities in the U.S. longing for an authentic connection to their roots.

"Diaspora definitely plays an important role in popularizing genealogical tourism," Santos said. "Individual cultural and ethnic identities exist in fragmented and discontinuous forms in the U.S. Traveling to identify with an unknown past seems to give existence to meanings and values that the individual then carries forward on into their present."

Since diaspora is a ubiquitous condition in our multicultural country, "our ancestors' past seems less retrievable and almost mythical," Yan said.

The authors say that exploring, re-defining and confirming our identities are life-long projects.

"A lot of us may feel that there's a tension between the need to feel connected and the need to be individualistic," Santos said. "Genealogical travel gives us a practical way to explore those feelings and move toward a deeper understanding of our identities."

Genealogical tourism also serves as a "communicative platform" for our doubts and fears about our hyper-connected world, Santos said.

"Not only does it help to mitigate the desires and anxieties about our age, genealogical tourism also encourages us to take a more humanistic approach toward issues of belonging, home, heritage and identity," she said.

Provided by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

"Genealogical tourism redefining leisure travel market, professor says." March 4th, 2010.  
[www.physorg.com/news186936112.html](http://www.physorg.com/news186936112.html)